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ABSTRACT

Selecting a superintendent is a complex and varied process. This is a comprehensive how-to guide intended to represent an overview of questions, problems, and actions a school board will have to consider and plan for in the search for a new superintendent. Early decisions include setting a schedule for the selection procedure, choosing a search coordinator, and establishing a budget. Thoughtful analysis of educational goals and problems is advised as these can be determinants of leadership needs. Initial and final interview objectives and techniques as well as community involvement and terms of contract are included. An appendix contains a sample vacancy announcement and contract; and credential, interview, and community visitation assessment forms. (EJS)

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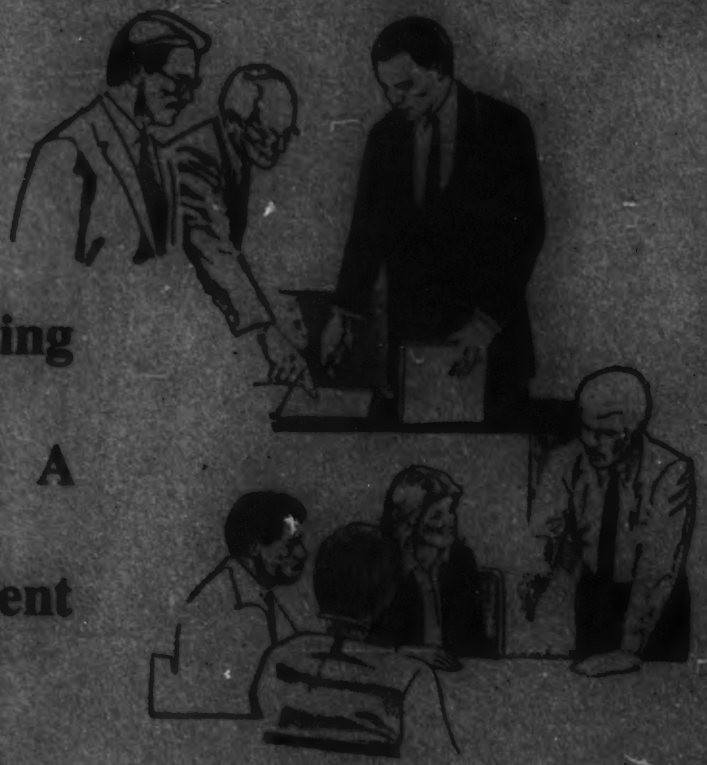
Selecting A Superintendent



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Selecting A Superintendent

This document has been adapted and prepared by the Idaho School Boards Association as an instrument to assist school districts in their selection of a Superintendent of Schools.

It is obvious that the procedures suggested herein will not serve every circumstance.

It is hoped that each district will be able to modify the suggested procedures to its own needs.

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I. An Overview of the Search Process

The following is intended to represent an overview of the range questions, problems and actions which the board of education will have to consider and plan for in the search for a new superintendent. It is suggested that the board review this list carefully before embarking upon the selection process. Space is provided to add other matters which the board sees as being important to its own unique situation. The remainder of this guide consists of a discussion of the matters mentioned below.

_____Develop a schedule for implementing the selection procedure.
_____Appoint someone to coordinate the selection procedure.
_____Establish a budget for the selection procedure.
_____Decide who will receive applications.
_____Determine whether outside consultants will be used.
_____Decide if persons other than the board members will participate in the selection process. If yes, how?
_____Analyze the goals, needs and problems of the school system.
_____Establish the salary range and other contracts provisions.
_____Announce to the community, local staff and profession the existence of the vacancy and the selection procedures to be followed.
_____Prepare information describing the local school system and the community for distribution to placement agencies and candidates.
_____Select a screening committee.
_____Select the most promising candidates for more intensive consideration, including interviews.
_____Plan carefully for interviews.
_____Conduct follow-up interviews.
_____Reach a decision which the entire board will support.
_____Negotiate the contract.
_____Promptly inform candidates of their status when they are no longer under consideration.
_____Announce the selection of the new superintendent.
_____Return all confidential papers to the placement bureaus and destroy any other unneeded materials.

II. Some Of The Early Decisions

Perhaps the first question the board of education has to decide is when it wants the new superintendent to be on the job. This factor will determine how much time the board has to search out the best person for the job and how it must proceed in order to meet the deadline. If the board gets a resignation from its superintendent in mid-July and determines that the new person should be on the job before school starts in the fall, it is fairly certain that some steps will have to be abbreviated or omitted altogether. A year's notice, on the other hand, no doubt allows more time than is actually needed to do the job carefully. Four to six months is frequently regarded as a desirable time span for the search.

While it is still typical for a new superintendent to begin employment during the summer months, the rationale for this is rapidly shifting and more boards of education seem to be open to releasing and filling the top administrative post during the regular school year. The reasons for this are several: school boards sometimes do accept the resignations of their top administrators during mid-contract if the request seems reasonable; the work load of the superintendent is no longer tied to the opening and closing of school (the time of year for negotiations, bond issue or levy campaigns, budget preparation, or staff recruitment may be more significant than the school opening date for having the new superintendent on the job). As school systems have increased in size, many central office administrative staffs have been enlarged making it possible for boards to extend the time spent in searching for the new educational leader without any particular short time risk to the basic operating efficiency of the school system. The board faced with a vacancy in the office of the superintendent in late summer will need to weigh carefully the values of moving quickly against those of a more extended search.

The following outline suggests certain major events in the selection procedure for which your board of education may find it helpful to establish target dates.

III. Schedule For The Selection Procedure

Event	Date
Announce the vacancy	_____
Determine qualifications of the position	_____
Close applications	_____
Complete screening of applications	_____

Event	Date
Complete initial interviews of the top candidates	_____
Final interviews	_____
Intensive review of final candidates	_____
Reach a decision	_____
New superintendent to be on the job	_____

Selecting a Coordinator

It is highly important that the board of education appoint one person to coordinate the work of the selection procedure. The coordinator might be a board member, the clerk or secretary to the board, or the personnel director. Rarely, however, would it be advisable to have the incumbent superintendent serve in this role. Regardless of the individual chosen, it is important that the board members have complete confidence in the coordinator's ability to carry through the task in a professional and business like manner. The board must make certain that the coordinator has adequate time to execute the assigned responsibilities, for they will be very demanding at certain periods. The following are illustrative of the relationships and functions which the school board may wish to assign to the coordinator:

- Be responsible to the board of education alone.
- Handle all correspondence promptly and courteously.
- Contact placement offices and other sources of applicants.
- Provide information to the candidates.
- Receive all applications.
- Handle all telephone inquiries.
- Assemble applicants' dossiers.
- Arrange for interviews.
- Process candidates' travel expenses.
- Inform candidates promptly when they are no longer under consideration.
- Arrange for a guide for candidates when they are visiting the school system.
- Prepare and administer the budget for the selection procedure.

Establishing the Budget

When the search for the new superintendent is extended beyond the school system itself, it is likely that there will be some costs involved. In view of the widely accepted belief that the selection of the superintendent is the school board's single most critical responsibility, the selection procedure is scarcely the point at which to introduce an austerity program. However, the legality of all expenditures should be established. The budget for the selection procedure might include a number of the following items, as well as others unique to the situation:

IV. The Budget For The Selection Procedure

Item	Estimated Amount
Travel for candidates	_____
Lodging for candidates	_____
Consultants to the board	_____
Printing brochures	_____
Mailing costs	_____
Rental of interview rooms	_____
Meals	_____
(Other)_____	_____

Consultants: To Use or Not To Use

Before the board of education gets deeply into the selection process, it should deal with the question of whether or not to employ outside consultants to assist in carrying out the search for the new superintendent. If the decision is to utilize consultants, then they should be involved as early as possible in the planning. The practice by boards of education of using consultants seems to be an ever-increasing one. It is not unusual for boards to employ two or even three consultants. In cases where more than one consultant is employed, they are frequently from different institutions or agencies. While colleges and universities are probably the primary sources of consultants, private consulting firms, various education associations, and even practicing school superintendents sometimes serve in this capacity. The role of the consultant is determined by the employing board of education; however,

some of the tasks which they frequently are called upon to perform are:

- Helping in the identification and resolution of differences of opinion within the board.
- Providing information on prevailing practices.
- Aiding the board in identifying the problems and needs of the school system.
- Assisting in drawing up desired qualifications or criteria for the position of superintendent.
- Notifying placement offices and other sources of the job vacancy.
- Helping in the preparation of basic written information describing the school system and community.
- Screening applicants on the basis of criteria approved by the board of education.
- Seeking additional information about candidates at the request of the board.
- Advising with regard to the use and interpretation of any tests and examinations employed.
- Suggesting salary range and contract conditions.

The use of consultants in all probability will not mean less responsibility for board members, but their service should enable your board to focus its attention and energy on matters of greatest importance. It should be reemphasized that the judgement of consultants can never substitute for that of your board of education. Your board, not the consultant, is accountable to the public for its choice of the chief school administrator. Further potential value in the use of consultants is that they frequently have channels of communication open to trusted colleagues in the profession who are thoroughly familiar with the work of applicants, either as students or as practicing administrators. Often this highly personalized source of information is not available to boards of education.

Citizen, Staff and Student Participation

An increasing number of boards of education are seeking ways to involve citizens, students, and professional and classified employees in the selection process. If done effectively, the board members can gain a better understanding of how various school and community groups perceive school leadership needs and problems. Some boards have been able to achieve the involvement of outside groups through relatively simple arrangements. It should be understood by all, that the participation of others outside the board in the selection process in no way relieves the board of any of its responsibilities for selecting the superintendent.

In deciding whether to involve others in the selection process, consideration should be given to the following questions:

- Is there time to involve others?
- Does the board see value in having input from various reference groups?
- How would involvement be viewed by the community, staff and students?
- Does the coordinator have the time to organize and implement a process of involvement?
- What groups would be involved?
- How would the groups be involved?

Possible means of involvement of others in the process of selecting the superintendent include:

- Inviting individuals or groups to indicate their views in writing to the board of the leadership qualities needed in the new superintendent.
- Conducting an open meeting in which individuals or group representatives present their views to the school board concerning leadership needs in the school district.
- Having teachers, principals, classified employees, parents, and students interview the top ranking candidates and report their perceptions of each to the board. (A rating scale completed independently by each interviewer immediately after each interview can be an effective feedback mechanism.)

The board of education should agree in advance upon the ground rules for participation by groups or individuals and should communicate this to them clearly.

V. Educational Goals and Problems: Determinants of Leadership Needs

The qualifications and qualities sought in a new superintendent should be directly related to the goals of the school system and the problems which stand in the way of the full achievement of those goals. This calls for a thoughtful analysis by the board of education of the present status of the educational program and the desired directions of development. While evaluation of the educational system is an ongoing responsibility of the board of education, that assessment which takes place at the time of a change in top school leadership is especially significant.

If time and resources permit, the assessment of school system goals, problems, and leadership needs should involve professional staff members, the students, and segments of the community. The departing superintendent should be given an opportunity to share his thoughts at an "exit interviews"

with the board regarding the problems and needs of the school system. Even if the board-superintendent relationship may have been difficult, the superintendent's perspective should be solicited and evaluated for its potential contribution.

As indicated earlier, the services of consultants may be particularly helpful to a board as it examines the community's educational mission and leadership needs. Input from groups outside the board may be secured through formal, structured meetings with representative groups, surveys, or through open invitations to people to convey their ideas and opinions of the educational needs in the community and the qualifications for the new superintendent. It seems reasonable to believe that the board of education which has a clear idea of where the community should be headed educationally is more likely to find a superintendent who can give effective leadership in achieving those objectives.

Some of the types of questions which might assist the board of education in thinking about the community's educational goals and needs are suggested below:

- What are the most critical educational needs or problems facing the school district at this time?
- What are (or should be) the longer range educational goals for the community?
- What critical or recurrent problems has the board of education been dealing with primarily over the past several years?
- How does the community feel about the schools?
- What does the community expect from its schools?
- What are the trends in education today which have implications for education in the community?
- Does the situation call for a leader who must be able to relate to and influence diverse community groups?
- Does the community expect its school system to be progressive, conservative, or take a middle-of-the-road position in the adoption of new educational practices?

In examining such questions it is important that your board keep in mind that its task at this point is the selection of a new superintendent. The degree of involvement of persons or groups outside the board and the depth of the undertaking should be conditioned by the central task. The result must be translated into qualifications to be sought in the new superintendent.

VI. Agreeing On Qualifications

The board members should agree in writing on the personal and profes-

sional qualities which they desire in their new superintendent. As indicated earlier, the kind of leadership needed should be related directly to the educational goals of the district and the problems which must be dealt with in achieving those goals.

One way for a board of education to proceed with the task of formulating the qualifications for the job is to have one or two members prepare a tentative statement of qualifications which can be discussed and eventually approved by the entire board. As already noted, some boards solicit the opinions of staff, parents, and students in the process of establishing the desired qualifications.

The qualifications for the superintendency are frequently listed under three headings: *personal, professional,* and *experience*. Some of the items that a board of education may wish to consider in its statement of qualifications include the following:

Personal Qualities:

_____age range
_____marital status
_____emotional stability and physical stamina
_____interest in the larger community
_____ability to inspire others
_____public relations ability
_____ability to see the "big picture"
_____desire or willingness to involve others in decision-making processes

Professional Qualifications:

_____preferred level of educational attainment
_____certification required
_____special strengths sought

Experience:

_____teaching experiences
_____central office administration
_____previous superintendency, if any
_____type and location of systems in which experiences were gained
_____effective leadership and accomplishment demonstrated
_____experience in working with diverse groups
_____outstanding personal or professional recognition

Your board of education should also remember that it is seeking a leader for the school system's administrative team as well as an individual who can provide leadership to the staff and community. A careful analysis of your administrative team needs or problems, thus, may identify other unique

qualifications which the new superintendent should possess.

VII. Terms of the Contract

One of the perplexing problems facing a board of education at the outset of the search is that of determining the outlines of the proposed contract. The terms of the final document will likely result from the selection procedure. (A suggested form is to be found in the Appendix of this guide.) However, certain parameters of the contract need to be established in order to present a clear statement of the board's position in the announcements seeking candidates.

Setting the Salary

In many instances the amount of salary required to retain an incumbent superintendent is less than that needed to attract a new one. Thus, it is entirely possible that the beginning salary will need to be higher than that being paid to the superintendent being replaced. If this is the situation, the board should carefully consider the amount of increase for the new superintendent.

Usually the school board has available through the state department of education or professional associations the salaries of superintendents over a wide geographic area. Some of the factors the board may consider by a careful view of administrative salary studies are listed below:

_____ What is the comparable status of the salary paid the present superintendent? Statewide? In your immediate area? In similar school systems?

_____ How does your salary compare with recent trends? Over what area can you be competitive? Can you remain competitive?

_____ Will your salary attract candidates who meet your qualifications? Will you need to modify your qualifications? Your salary?

_____ Do you have a clear understanding of the fringe benefits available? Are they attractive augmentations to the salary?

_____ Will your stated range of beginning salary allow for meaningful negotiations? Will the planned increments be a positive contribution to the morale and motivation of the new superintendent?

Unless your board already has a salary schedule for administrative personnel that includes the superintendent, the determination of salary will be a major undertaking. The statement of the beginning salary will determine to a large extent who will be attracted as candidates for the position. You may want to emphasize in your statement that the amount stipulated is the beginning salary, there-by leaving options for increments which may overcome a lack of interest by especially qualified candidates.

Length of Initial Appointment

A matter of board concern often equal to that of salary is the length of the initial appointment. Understandably the element of uncertainty with respect to the performance and acceptance of a new chief administrator tends to lead to short term rather than long term initial contracts. The less certain a board is about the wisdom of its choice the more likely it is to be conservative in this regard.

In searching for guidance in setting the term of appointment your board may want to keep in mind the following considerations:

- If the board is unable to attract one of its highest rated candidates, a minimal period may be desirable.
- If the board is unable to arrive at a consensus regarding the person to be appointed, a minimal period may be desirable, provided the board articulates its reservations and criteria are established for evaluation on these points.
- The goals which the board has established for the school system may be an influencing factor in considering contract length.
- Both the board and the new superintendent should be in agreement that the term of appointment will be honored in both time and confidence.

While it is true that your board will want to attract the most promising candidates, it is also true that your statements of salary and length of initial appointment should be realistic in terms of your resources. Whatever you may conclude regarding salary, your statements should emphasize that *(a) it is the initial salary; (b) increments are open to negotiations; and (c) the determination of the actual salary will be based on the assessment of how well the candidate meets the stated qualifications.* As for length of contract, it is doubtful that it should be less than two years, to give a chance for adjustment.

VIII. Announcing The Vacancy

Regardless of whether the vacancy in the superintendency is known months in advance or occurs very suddenly, the board usually should an-

nounce formally at some point the existence of the vacancy and procedures for submitting an application. The exception to this procedure would be when the board has previously decided to promote and individual to the superintendency who is already in the school system.

Some school boards rely solely upon the news media to circulate information about their need for a new superintendent. While the news media and the "grapevine" will carry the word to some potential applicants, this approach leaves much to chance and should not be relied upon exclusively to announce the vacancy.

Placement offices in colleges and universities are an important avenue for disseminating information about job vacancies. The placement director may know of graduates of the institution who are seeking new opportunities or may pass the vacancy notice on to professors of educational administration and others who would recommend individuals whom they believe to be qualified. The Idaho School Boards Association can be of direct assistance.

Scope of the Search

The board of education must decide early in its selection procedure as to the scope of the search -- national, regional or statewide. When boards utilize the services of consultants, the matter of announcing the vacancy and soliciting nominations is frequently left in their hands. Consultants sometimes ask professors and other individuals to make nominations for the position, as well as circulating word of the vacancy through the usual placement channels.

Other agencies which boards sometimes include for the vacancy notifications are: state school board associations, the state associations of school administrators, and private placement offices. Newspaper advertisements are utilized also in some areas of the country.

What to Include in the Announcement

Announcements vary in detail from a few terse words indicating that a vacancy exists and "to contact the board president or designated person if interested," to printed brochures of several pages in length. If the search covers a broad geographic area, it is frequently advisable to include a substantial amount of information about the position, the school district and the community. The following items of information are generally regarded as essential in a vacancy announcement:

_____qualifications for the position
_____deadline for receiving applications
_____date for filling the position
_____salary (sometimes stated as a minimum, a range, or open, or negotiable)

_____fringe benefits
_____whom to contact in the district
_____procedures for filing applications.

Also, many announcements provide such additional information as:

- a job description of the superintendency
- information about the school system (enrollment, number of staff, organization features, budget, etc.)
- description of the community
- details of the selection procedures
- names and institutional affiliation of consultants assisting the board

Many candidates are as much interested in the area in which the school system is located as they are about some of the details of the position. Even though your community may be widely known, many of its more attractive aspects may not be. As stated earlier it may be desirable to develop a brochure presenting information about the school system and the surrounding area. Often materials about the community and the surrounding area (up to 100 miles) are available from the Chamber of Commerce, regional development groups, public utilities or other agencies. Collections of such materials to be sent to potential candidates or sources of candidates may prove to be great value in attracting highly qualified persons.

IX. Screening The Applicants

It is not unusual for a board of education to have 40 or more serious candidates for the chief executive's position and perhaps even 100 inquiries. Some plan must be adopted for identifying those candidates who would receive the board's most serious consideration. It is these few individuals whom the board needs to examine in careful detail. Screening the candidates is usually done by one of three groups: *the entire board; a committee of the board; or by consultants.* Some school boards want to utilize their time and efforts in serious investigation of only the very top candidates, and thus rely heavily on consultants for the screening procedure; other boards elect to conduct the screening themselves.

How to Screen the Candidates

The initial screening usually is based on the credentials of the candidates and other written information which they have provided. Interviews usually are not conducted at this point. The statement of qualifications adopted by the board becomes the guideline for evaluating each set of credentials. Where large numbers of candidates must be considered for screening purposes, a single rating scale based upon the board's statement of desired

qualifications may be quite helpful. (A rating scale can be found in the Appendix of this guide.) In some instances candidates may be automatically disqualified because they do not meet such board-established criteria as type of experience, certification or degree level.

It is recommended that each set of credentials be evaluated by those persons engaged in the screening procedure. The individual ratings can be compiled and the applicants with their total scores can be ranked in order from high to low. The entire screening group should then review the candidates and their ratings, giving particular attention to cases where members of the screening group varied widely in their evaluation. While situations vary, boards should probably plan to evaluate in detail the top three to six candidates.

X. The Initial Interview

Importance of the Interview

The interview can yield certain important information about candidates that other techniques will not provide. It should not, however, be regarded as the sole selection tool. Rather, the interview represents but one important step in a series of steps in the board's search to find the person who best meets its criteria for educational leadership.

Purposes of the Interview

There are two major purposes for the interview. First, it provides the candidate with an opportunity to present additional information. Also, this procedure should enable those who are conducting the interview to observe certain significant attributes of the candidate, to secure information not provided in the credentials, and to observe the thought processes and interpersonal skills of the candidate.

The second major purpose of the interview is to provide the candidate with first-hand information regarding the community, the school system, and the job itself. For alert candidates, the interview provides an occasion for evaluating the school system and its board of education. Thus, the interview is a two-way street.

Conducting the Interview

Obviously the board of education will interview the candidates. Some boards go no further than this, but, as indicated earlier, there is a trend in selection procedures to have other groups participate in the interview. It is

not rare to find districts which schedule candidates for a day or longer in order that they may meet with groups of teachers, students, parents and administrators. Broadening the interview participation base has the advantage of getting more perceptions of the candidate's potential effectiveness from important school-community groups with whom the superintendent will have to work. No doubt such a procedure also provides the candidate with a better understanding of the real characteristics of the community and its schools.

If a number of groups are involved in the interviewing, the board will need to decide whether to organize homogeneous interviewing teams or to have mixed teams composed of, for instance, a school board member, citizen, teacher, administrator and student. Both methods of organization have certain advantages which will need to be considered by the board. In the final analysis, however, the actual selection is the sole responsibility of the board of education.

If the candidate is meeting with a number of groups during the course of the day, interviews should probably not exceed 45 minutes to an hour. The session with the board can be expected to take longer -- perhaps two or more hours. A board should never undertake interviews with more than two candidates in a single day (or night!)

Interviewing Techniques

The members of the board of education especially, as well as other groups participating in interviews, should do some pre-planning for conducting the interview. The interviewers should have in mind the information, attitudes, knowledge or skills which they want the candidate to reveal about himself. Time also must be provided for the candidate to ask questions. In some cases boards prepare for themselves a list of the questions or topics which they want to be sure are discussed by all candidates. This procedure should assist interviewers in making comparisons among candidates.

It is important not to let the interview with the board develop into a discussion of some area of exploration, especially between board members. Questions should be pursued only as long as they contribute to the interview regardless of the interest in the specific topic by board members or the candidate.

Each school board or interview group should develop its own interview questions. No doubt the questions students or teachers ask of prospective superintendents will vary considerably from those asked by board members. Examples of types of questions sometimes posed to candidates by boards are as follows:

1. Have you found being an educator satisfying?
2. What attracted you to this position?
3. Are there aspects of your education and experience that you feel would be especially helpful in this position?

4. What do you see as your major contributions in your present position?
5. What would you like to accomplish in your present position but doubt that you will be able to?
6. How do you work best in organizing people and resources to get a task done?
7. Which of the newest management techniques do you feel are most promising?
8. What is the superintendent's role in serious conflicts affecting the schools?
9. What kinds of relationships do you have with your employee organization?
10. What do you think of the emerging concept of administration through the "management team?"
11. Are the new educational programs likely to improve schooling for youngsters?
12. Can you see any board social issues that affect schools in this state?
13. What are your thoughts about (dress codes, busing, teacher strikes -- any real problems facing your schools)?
14. What is the best way to establish and maintain good board-superintendent relations?

Recording Interview Impressions

If a board of education expects to interview several candidates, the members should adopt a systematic procedure for recording their impressions of the various candidates. A variety of procedures may be used for this purpose, ranging from each member making his own notes about each candidate, to a rating scale where the candidate is evaluated on each qualification which the board is seeking in its superintendent.

If groups other than the board members interview the candidate, some method of securing feedback from these participants must be provided. These feedback channels can utilize one or more devices such as:

- formal evaluation checklists completed by each interviewer
- word-of-mouth feedback to board members
- a ranking of the candidates by the interviewers

Where the rating scale is used, it is recommended that the ratings be completed immediately following the interview and without consultation or comparisons with other interviewers. After all candidates have been interviewed and rated, total scores can be computed and the candidates ranked on the basis of the ratings. Utilizing the rankings, the board can then make its decision as to which candidates to consider further. (A sample interview rating scale can be found in the Appendix of this guide.)

XI. The Community Visitations

For the one or two top candidates under consideration, the board should make a thorough study of performance in their past assignments. The previous leadership effectiveness of the candidate is an important indication of what may be expected in a new situation.

The importance of a visit to the community (or communities) where candidates are or have been employed may be a way of gathering significant first-hand perceptions about the candidate in the community and on the job.

Who To See

While in the community, the board members should plan to talk to people representing many different interests. These persons could be selected from the following categories:

_____parents
_____board members
_____students
_____news media
_____area colleges
_____teachers
_____administrators
_____community leaders
_____Chambers of Commerce
_____school employees

What To Look (and Listen) For

The visiting board members must carefully weigh the accumulated information and perceptions in terms of the total situation in which the candidate is or was working. Because communities and school systems may vary widely in terms of their makeup, it is not surprising to find administrators, judged as successful (or unsuccessful) in one setting, who may generally be regarded in an opposite view in another situation. Most school administrators, even effective ones, will have their critics! For these reasons, the individuals who investigate the backgrounds of candidates must have clear ideas as to those qualities of leadership for which they are searching, and keen ears for discerning what people are really saying about the candidate. And why! Criticisms about a candidate in one community may represent sought-after qualities in another.

The list of qualifications developed by the board provides a guide for the visitation team members as they talk with people. It is important that the visiting board learn of the opinion held about the candidate by the various interest groups. Particular attention should be given to those characteristics

and qualifications which the board feels are most important for effective educational leadership in their own school system. During the visit short conferences should be held among board members to determine if anyone has learned of something that needs further investigation by the group before they depart.

It may be helpful for the visiting team members to use an evaluation checklist as a way of recording their judgment of the candidate. (See Appendix.)

Planning the Visit

- The candidate should agree to the board's visit and make the purpose known to appropriate people in the community.
- Make definite appointments with selected people.
- Have definite areas of investigation in mind.
- It may be desirable for the team to split up in some instances in order to see more people.
- Be positive when approaching people about the candidate.

XII. The Final Interview

There are at least two objectives to be accomplished at the time of the final interview. First, it provides an opportunity for both the board of education and the candidate to deeply probe the facts, attitudes, perceptions, understandings and expectations which each holds toward the other. If the prospective superintendent has not met members of the professional staff and the incumbent superintendent, this may be the appropriate occasion for such a meeting, any questions or concerns growing out of your board's visitation to the candidate's community should be raised at this time and the candidate should be given an opportunity to tell "his side of the story." The board also at this time may ask the candidate to reflect upon his perceptions of the school system. The final interview is a time for directness, for clearing up any misunderstandings, and for truth!

The second objective of the final interview is to enable the board to reach its decision regarding the candidate. When a decision is reached, the chairman of the board would normally be expected to extend the offer of the appointment together with the proposed salary. The chairman should also indicate the length of time the successful candidate will have to respond to the offer.

XIII. From the Candidate's Perspective

The selection of a superintendent is only partially in the board's hands; the candidates or potential candidates have a "say", albeit and indirect one, in who will be chosen superintendent. The candidates who must interest the board of education may be those who will probe most deeply into the nature of the job. Just as boards of education prepare their criteria for a superintendent, the intelligent school administrator formulates his own criteria for judging the board, the school system and community. A wise board will be looking for candidates who are desirous of much information about the total situation and who give evidence of "understanding what they may be getting into." It should not be considered a particularly rare occurrence for a top candidate to withdraw his name from further consideration after having investigated a job. The reasons for this action, of course, may be subtle and known only to the candidate (and his or her spouse).

What should the candidate be looking for in a potential superintendency? Obviously, each applicant must answer that question for himself; but in a general sense, it can be said that there are some things he should be quite concerned about.

- A knowledge of the history of the community, especially with reference to its support aspiration, and expectation for education.
- A sense of direction in which the board and community may wish to move.
- Evidence of conflict within or between the community, the school board, and the staff and the potential for resolving any conflicts.
- What's new in the schools, if anything.
- What are the reasons for the departure of the previous superintendent?
- How does the board perceive its role and that of the superintendent?
- What are the chances for a change in board membership in the near future? For what reasons? What might be the effect?
- Would the position be considered a professional advancement?
- What are the conditions of work? Salary? Length of contract? Fringe benefits? Participation in and attendance at professional meetings? Participation in community activities?
- What are the crucial issues facing the district?
- How will the superintendent be evaluated? When? Will it be formal?

Boards of education should encourage candidates to investigate their community and not try to cover up any problems. If a candidate does not feel capable of resolving the problems facing the district, it is infinitely better to find this out before he becomes the superintendent.

Candidates for a position have many sources for information about the district. A few of these are: the general reputation of the community, which may have been communicated quite widely; the incumbent superintendent; the board; the news media; state reports and studies; friends in the community; members of the staff; state educational organizations; and the man pumping gas in a service station.

XIV. Other Considerations

The following "other considerations" are intended to draw attention to a few additional matters which may find their way into the board's deliberations.

Keeping the People Informed

The employment of a new superintendent is a matter of widespread interest in most communities. A thoughtfully planned and implemented program for keeping the public and staff informed of the progress being made in selecting the new superintendent can be a very important part of the board's public relations responsibility. Many people will want to know how the board of education is going about the job of choosing the top leader for its schools. An accountable board will take specific steps to see that the public and staff is informed to the fullest extent possible.

While each board must decide for itself what information is to be released to the public, the following list is illustrative of the kinds of matters which are frequently regarded as in the public interest:

- Announcement of the resignation, retirement, or release of the incumbent superintendent.
- Announcement of the procedures to be followed in the selection process.
- Announcement of the criteria desired.
- Announcement of the time schedule.
- Announcements as each major step in the selection process is undertaken.
- Announcement of any significant changes in the selection plan, such as delays.
- Announcement of the board's selection.

There are many potential embarrassments and difficulties in releasing information concerning the procedures and the status of the search. Among these are those of unchecked pressures, damage to the status of potential candidates in their present positions, and "leaks" in information that make it ap-

pear that only a selected few outside the search group are being kept informed.

Your board should understand the serious need for the confidentiality of information and impress this fact upon those who are associated with you in the search for a new superintendent. The board may find it advisable to release all information to news media and interest persons by preparing informative, carefully written statements.

Should serious difficulties or unexpected delays in the selection procedure develop, consideration should be given to an "off the record" briefing session for the top policy makers of your local news media.

Promote from Within? Or Go Outside?

Boards frequently face this issue. Their decisions, no doubt, hinge upon many factors. Are there serious candidates within? How has the previous administration been regarded? To what extent are inside candidates identified with the previous superintendent? To what extent are inside candidates committed to certain lines of action because of previous decisions or positions on important issues? What is the reputation of individual candidates in the school system? The community? Do they meet the criteria established by the board?

Studies of the selection of superintendents suggest that a board is more likely to select a superintendent from outside the school system if it desires a change in the present situation. If the board is satisfied with the present state of affairs, then it is more inclined to promote from within. Some school systems over the years have followed a practice of employing only superintendents from outside the system while others have regularly selected persons from within.

In most cases boards of education invite applications for the superintendency from personnel within the school system as well as without, announcing that all applicants will be given consideration. It is imperative that the board make every effort to find the best man for the job regardless of whether he is from within or from outside, the system.

Board Ethics in Selection

A thoughtfully developed plan for selection, supported by the entire board, is probably the best insurance against action which could be considered unethical. All board action should be in good faith. If your board has privately agreed on a person, then the position should not be opened up in an effort to persuade the public that wider search is being made.

In order to avoid any charges of "pirating" a superintendent from a neigh-

boring district, the board may wish to announce as a part of its policy that it will not initiate contacts with any potential candidates. On the other hand, your board may be announcing that it is looking for the best person available for the job, regardless of where he or she might be. The board should also consider getting clearance from the candidates for checking references. Frequently they will not want this done unless they are getting serious consideration.

The board should establish a policy regarding the confidentiality of applications, publicize the policy, and then follow it. Observe your state association's code of ethics in this regard. Candidates, as well as the public and staff, need to be informed of this policy and need to feel that it will be honored. An "open selection process" where the finalists meet a wide variety of people in the community may make it difficult, if not impossible, to keep names out of the news. Needless to say, all members of the news media should be informed of the board's selection procedure and the rationale behind its major decisions.

The Role of the Superintendent's Family

The superintendencies in the United States today is primarily occupied by men, but trends strongly indicate that more women will be making their appearance in this field in the years ahead. The role of the family is not one that is likely to go unnoticed by careful boards in the selection process, yet the significance attached to the family role is difficult to assess. Some boards specify in their vacancy announcement that applicants should be married and a few even go so far as to state that the superintendent and his wife should have children. Such specifications as these, however, may be expected less frequently in the future. The role of the family, no doubt, varies considerably from one community to another. If this is an important consideration with your board, the reputation of the superintendent's family may be assessed during the occasion of the community visitation. Then, too boards must be cognizant of fair employment practices and not deviate from them.

In Conclusion

As was suggested in the introduction, the selection of the superintendent is, no doubt, the single most significant undertaking of the board of education. No blueprint exists, however, to show the board precisely how to proceed in discharging this responsibility. In the final analysis, the members of the board must rely on their collective judgment as to the most effective and efficient steps to follow. It was the intent of this manual to highlight certain procedural alternatives for the consideration of boards of education engaged in the search for a new superintendent. With conscious reflection upon the total selection process and careful planning for implementation, it is believed that stronger candidates will be identified and attracted and the board will more nearly find the candidate of its choice.

Appendix

Vacancy Announcement

Position: Superintendent of Schools

District: Eurekaville Area School District
Eurekaville, Idaho

Date of Filling: On or about September 1, 19--

Contact: Ms. Sandra MacCracken
Search Coordinator
Eurekaville Area School District
Eurekaville, Idaho 12345

The Eurekaville Area School District is an independent unit enrolling 6900 students in one senior high school, two junior high schools, seven elementary schools with participation in a vocational high school district comprising Eurekaville and four other area districts. The school district other area districts. The district employes 287 teachers, ten principals, five curriculum specialists and two assistant superintendents. Student enrollment has remained steady during the past three years and no marked increase is anticipated.

The school district is located in the southern area of the state and encompasses Eurekaville (population 11,000), several small villages and generally productive small farms. It is located near two interstate highways and is within easy driving distance of several larger cities. The economy and population of the area are stable and the area is generally thought to be highly desirable for residency. Enclosed with this announcement are several publications highlighting points of interest in the area. Also enclosed are three recent publications of the school district.

The vacancy is the result of the announced retirement of the present superintendent who has held the position for eleven years.

Qualifications

The board of education desires to have an open search for the superintendency and has placed no restrictions on candidacies. It is hoped that all per-

sons wishing to be considered will review this statement of qualifications and if they deem it appropriate to do so, make their interest known in the manner prescribed.

Highly rated candidates will most likely be those who have completed a minimum of 30 semester hours beyond the master's degree or perhaps holders of a doctorate in educational administration. They will also possess a standard certificate for the superintendency currently valid. They will show evidence of continuous educational advancement either by attendance at a university or by significant professional undertakings.

Professional experiences to be valued will reflect classroom teaching experience, administrative or supervisory experience in instructional related positions, responsibilities for district-wide administrative positions, and/or chief school administrator. While not all of these qualities may be present, the successful candidate will have had district-wide responsibilities and will have demonstrated a pattern of professional advancement that clearly indicates leadership ability.

Though no restrictions have been established for age, it is likely that other qualities sought would indicate that the final candidate would be no younger than 30 or no older than 60.

It is the desire of the board to emphasize that all conditions of employment will conform to the Equal Opportunities Employment Act and the regulations of the State Human Rights Commission. Applicants who have reason to believe that the provisions of these acts and regulations are not being followed should notify the board in writing.

The initial term of appointment will be for not fewer than two years nor more than three years. The exact period will be subject to negotiations.

The beginning salary will be not less than $42,000 nor more than $46,000. Annual increments for the term of the initial contract will be subject to negotiations.

All inquiries regarding the position should be made in writing to Ms. Sandra MacCracken, Eurekaville Area School District, Eurekaville, Idaho 12345. Candidates are responsible for forwarding to Ms. MacCracken:

(a) A personal letter expressing interest in the position
(b) Appropriate college or university credentials
(c) Any other materials which would be of use to the Search Committee in evaluating your candidacy.

Credential Assessment

(A Sample Form for Screening Candidates)

Name of Candidate:_____Date: _____

INSTRUCTIONS: The qualities and qualifications listed below have been agreed upon by the Board of Education as desirable in the superintendent to be selected. Rate the candidate on each item below by circling the appropriate number in the scale; then mark the "**OVERALL ASSESSMENT.**" Complete the form individually and anonymously without conferring with other members of the screening committee. Give the form to the person designated to receive it.

ASSESSMENT SCALE: 1 - Very Poor; 2 - Poor; 3 - Average; 4 - Good; 5 - Very Good. Leave unrated those items for which you feel there is insufficient information.

I. PERSONAL QUALITIES	**SCALE**
Age: Range	1 2 3 4 5
Personal characteristics	1 2 3 4 5
Leadership potential	1 2 3 4 5
Strength of references	1 2 3 4 5
II. PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS	
Level of training	1 2 3 4 5
Eligible for appropriate certificate	1 2 3 4 5
Particular administrative strengths sought	1 2 3 4 5
III. EXPERIENCE	
As a teacher	1 2 3 4 5
As an administrator	1 2 3 4 5
Quality of experience	1 2 3 4 5
Professional recognition	1 2 3 4 5
Experience in working with diverse groups	1 2 3 4 5
A record of leadership accomplishment	1 2 3 4 5
OVERALL ASSESSMENT	1 2 3 4 5

NOTE: This form may be reproduced or modified to suit the particular needs of the Board of Education.

Interview Assessment

(A Sample for Interviewing Candidates)

Name of Candidate:_____Date: _____

INSTRUCTIONS: Rate the candidate on each item below by circling the appropriate number in the scale; then mark the "**OVERALL ASSESSMENT.**" Complete the form individually and anonymously without conferring with other members of the interview group. Give the completed form to the person designated to receive it.

ASSESSMENT SCALE: 1 - Very Poor; 2 - Poor; 3 - Average; 4 - Good; 5 - Very Good.

SAMPLE ITEMS	SCALE
1. Personal Maturity	1 2 3 4 5
2. Leadership Potential	1 2 3 4 5
3. Commitment to Education	1 2 3 4 5
4. Appropriateness and Quality of Experience	1 2 3 4 5
5. Understanding of School Organization	1 2 3 4 5
6. Approaches to Decision Making	1 2 3 4 5
7. Knowledge of Professional Education	1 2 3 4 5
8. Emotional Stability	1 2 3 4 5
9. Ability to Deal Effectively with Conflict	1 2 3 4 5
10. Effectiveness in Communication	1 2 3 4 5
11. Ability to Inspire Trust and Credibility	1 2 3 4 5
12. Attitude Toward Innovation	1 2 3 4 5
13. Sensitivity to Broad Social Issues	1 2 3 4 5
OVERALL ASSESSMENT	1 2 3 4 5

NOTE: This form may be reproduced or modified to suit the particular needs of the Board of Education.

Community Visitation Assessment
(A Sample Form)

District Visited:_____
Candidate:_____Date:_____

INSTRUCTIONS: Rate the candidate on each item below by circling the appropriate number in the scale; then mark the **"OVERALL ASSESSMENT."** Complete the form individually and anonymously without conferring with other members of the visitation group. Give the completed form to the person designated to receive it.

ASSESSMENT SCALE: 1 - Very Poor; 2 - Poor; 3 - Average; 4 - Good; 5 - Very Good.

SAMPLE ITEMS	SCALE
1. Leadership with the Board	1 2 3 4 5
2. Leadership with the Faculty	1 2 3 4 5
3. Civic Participation	1 2 3 4 5
4. Civic Leadership	1 2 3 4 5
5. School-Community Relations	1 2 3 4 5
6. General Reputation	1 2 3 4 5
7. Teachers' Opinion of Candidate	1 2 3 4 5
8. Pupils' Opinion of Candidate	1 2 3 4 5
9. Parents' Opinion of Candidate	1 2 3 4 5
10. Ability to Handle Difficult Problems	1 2 3 4 5
OVERALL ASSESSMENT	1 2 3 4 5

NOTE: This form may be reproduced or modified to suit the particular needs of the Board of Education.

The Superintendent's Contract

The sample contract which follows has been prepared by the American Association of School Administrators. It is intended to be illustrative and suggestive of the kinds of items that should be included in a carefully prepared contract. It is a working guide only, and some sections must be deleted and others added or revised to accommodate varying codes and local conditions. Idaho of course has it's own basic contract.[1]

Just as a superintendent of schools may wish to retain his own legal counsel when entering into a contract, a board of education may want to consult its attorney with regard to the terms of the contract.

WORKING GUIDE TO THE SUPERINTENDENT'S CONTRACT

It is hereby agreed by and between the Board of Education of the

_____School District No._____located in

_____County in the State of_____

(hereinafter called the Board) and_____
(name of employee)

(hereinafter called the Superintendent) that the said Board in accordance with its action as found in the minutes of the meeting held on the_____ day of_____19____has and does hereby employ the said_____as Superintendent of_____
(name of employee)

Schools for a_____year period commencing_____, 19_____.

Both parties agree that said employee shall perform the duties of the Superintendent of Schools in and for the public schools in said district as prescribed by the laws of the State of_____and by the rules and regulations made thereunder by the Board of Education in said District.

1 Guidelines for the Superintendent's Contract, American Association of School Administrators, 1801 North Moore Street, Arlington, Virginia 22209 - 1967.

Witnesseth

That, in consideration of a salary of $_____to be paid the first year, $_____to be paid the second year, and.....said Superintendent agrees to perform faithfully the duties of Superintendent of Schools and to serve as Executive Officer of the Board of Education. The annual salary shall be paid in equal installments in accordance with the policy of the Board governing payment of other professional staff members in the District.

That the Board of Education hereby retains the right to adjust the annual salary of the Superintendent during the term of this contract, said salary adjustment not to reduce the annual salary below the figures stated above. Any adjustment in salary made during the life of this contract shall be in the form of an amendment and shall become part of this contract. It is provided, however, that by so doing it shall not be considered that the Board of Education has entered into a new contract with the Superintendent nor that the termination date of the existing contract has been extended. However, the Board may by specific action extend the termination date of the existing contract if such extension is permitted by state law.

That throughout the term of this contract the Superintendent shall be subject to discharge for good and just cause, provided, however, that the Board does not arbitrarily or capriciously call for his dismissal and that the Superintendent shall have the right to service of written charges, notice of hearing, and a fair hearing before the Board. If the Superintendent chooses to be accompanied by legal counsel at the hearing, said legal expenses will be incurred by the Superintendent.

That it is agreed that the Superintendent will furnish throughout the life of this contract a valid and appropriate certificate to act as Superintendent of Schools in the State of_____as directed by the Board of Education and that the Superintendent hereby agrees to devote his time, skill, labor, and attention to said employment during the term of this contract, provided, however, that the Superintendent, by agreement with the Board, may undertake consultative work, speaking engagements, writing, lecturing, or other professional duties and obligations.

That the Superintendent will have complete freedom to organize, reorganize, and arrange the administrative and supervisory staff which in his judgment best serves the_____Public Schools; that the administration of instruction and business affairs will be lodged with the Superintendent and administered by him with the assistance of his staff; that the responsibility for selection, placement, and transfer of personnel shall be vested in the Superintendent and his staff; and that the Board of Education, individually and collectively, will refer promptly all criticisms, complaints, and suggestions called to its attention to the Superintendent for study and recommendation.

That should the Superintendent be unable to perform any or all of his duties by reason of illness, accident, or other cause beyond his control and said disability exists for a period of more than_____during any school

year, the School District may in its discretion make a proportionate deduction from the salary stipulated, and if such disability continues for more than _____ or if said disability is permanent, irreparable, or of such nature as to make the performance of his duties impossible, the school district may, at its option, terminate this agreement, whereupon the respective duties, rights, and obligations hereof shall terminate.

That the Superintendent does hereby agree to have a comprehensive medical examination not less than once every two years and not more often than once each year; that a statement certifying to the physical competency of the Superintendent of Schools shall be filed with the clerk or secretary of the Board of Education and treated as confidential information by the Board, the cost of said medical report to be borne by the District.

That the Board of Education shall provide the Superintendent with transportation required in the performance of his official duties during his employment under this contract or shall provide him with $_____ annually in lieu of transportation.

That the Board of Education shall devote a portion or all of one meeting, at least annually, to a discussion of the working relationships between the Superintendent and the Board.

That the Superintendent shall receive _____ days vacation annually exclusive of legal holidays and shall be entitled to _____ days sick leave annually. Vacation shall be taken within 12 months of the year in which it is earned and shall not be cumulative. Earned sick leave shall be cumulative to a maximum of_____days or as provided by state law or Board policy.

That the Board of Education at the request of the Superintendent and when in accordance with state statutes shall withhold and transfer an amount of salary annually or semi-annually or _____, said amount to be determined by the Superintendent, permitting the Superintendent of Schools to participate if he so desires, in a tax-deferred annuity program of his choosing.

That the Superintendent shall attend appropriate professional meetings at the local, state, and national level, the expenses of said attendance to be incurred by the District.

That the Board of Education shall reimburse the Superintendent for expenses incurred in moving his family, furniture, household goods, and related personal belongings from _____to_____, said expenses not to exceed $_____.

The failure to notify the Superintendent in writing, no later than one full year prior to the termination of the contract, of the Board's intent not to renew the contract will automatically result in a one-year extension of the existing contract.

That the Superintendent shall fulfill all aspects of this contract, any exception thereto being by mutual consent of the Board and the Superintendent.

Failure to fulfill the obligations agreed to in this contract will be viewed as a violation of the administrators' Code of Ethics and will be reported by the Board to the appropriate State Association of School Administrators and state educational authorities.

Date this_____day of_____,19_____

_____
President or Chairman, Board of Education

_____
Secretary or Clerk, Board of Education

_____
Employee